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REVIEWS

The Textual Tradition of Chaucer's Troilus. By ROBERT KILBURN ROOT. Published for the Chaucer Society. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., and Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1916 (for the issue of 1912).

It has been known for some time past in professional circles that Professor Root had in preparation an edition of the *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the present publication puts before us the fruits of his thorough-going investigations into the primary question as to what should be the textual basis of his proposed edition. The result is a textual study of great interest in which the main problems involved have, in the opinion of the present writer, found a satisfactory solution, although, as will be seen below, the author's final suggestion as to the best basis for a critical edition of the poem is hardly in accord with his own solution of these problems.

The *Troilus* has been preserved in sixteen MSS., of which two are incomplete. Moreover, two early prints—Caxton's *editio princeps* (about 1483) and Thynne's first collective edition of Chaucer's works (1532)—present texts that are independent of the MSS. now extant, and hence have a textual authority which is equal to that of the MSS. Professor Root first describes these various authorities in detail, and then in five successive chapters studies the manuscript relations for each of the five Books, respectively, that make up the poem. The basis of this study, as he explains in his preface, is "a minute examination of about 2500 lines chosen from all parts of the poem after a more cursory comparison of the authorities in their entirety. The lines chosen for careful study include: (1) the stanzas printed in the Chaucer Society's volume of Specimen Extracts; (2) the whole of the soliloquy on free choice in Book IV; (3) all lines in which there is a significant variation found in two or more MSS.; (4) all lines in which there is a variation, however slight, affecting the two main types of text, α and β , or the important group designated as γ ."

It will simplify the understanding of Professor Root's results, if I state at once that, according to his very convincing analysis, Chaucer turned over to a professional scribe the first (autograph) rough draft of the poem to transcribe, and, when the transcription

was returned to him, corrected in it the errors which the scribe was sure to have introduced. This corrected copy, which, of course, is no longer extant, is the archetype of the mss. of the so-called α group. Chaucer, however, himself kept this archetype in his possession and used it for revising and rearranging his work, writing new lines or phrases in the margin or between the lines. From this archetype in its final state of revision were derived the mss. of the β group, which are related to each other "only in that they are derived from Chaucer's archetype in its latest stage of revision." There would be this difference, then, between a ms. of the β group and one of the α group. A scribe, who was transcribing the β original (which was the α ms. after Chaucer had completed his progressive revision and correction of it) would often have before him more than a single reading. He would have in many cases the old reading—cancelled, to be sure—as well as the new reading. Then, in other instances, this β original, owing to corrections Chaucer had made, would, very likely, "present a confusing, if not illegible text." Every scholar knows, I may remark, what problems we often create for the typists of the present day, when we have introduced considerable alterations into the mss. which we submit to them. In cases where the earlier reading had been cancelled, but still remained legible, the copyist, through inadvertence or wrongheadedness, might, after all, transcribe this earlier reading. These conditions, furthermore, might give rise to conflate earlier readings. That is to say a copyist, not understanding altogether some indicated revision, might incorporate in his copy part of the revised and part of the unrevised reading. The whims and blunders of individual scribes, when confronted with these allurements to error which revision had created, would, of course, differ very much—hence the confusion that is observable in the relations of the β mss. A collation of the α and β mss. shows that the changes which Chaucer instituted in his revision are confined to comparatively limited areas. In Book I the variations are mainly found in the first 500 lines, the most important being the presence of stanza 128 in the α mss., which is not found outside of that group. In Book II, there are very few striking variations, save in ll. 701-1113, and in Book V there are virtually none, save ll. 1807-1827, about the flight of Troilus's soul to heaven, taken from the *Teseide*, which were added later. It is in Books III and IV that the groups exhibit the greatest differences. In the former Troilus's song of love,

ll. 1744-1771, seems to have been a later insertion. Stanzas 190 and 191, too, which in the first draft followed l. 1323, were moved down to a position immediately preceding l. 1415, and ll. 1323, 1415 and the first line of the shifted passage were then altered to suit the new relations. These are merely the most marked variations of Book III. In Book IV variations of equal significance are found, the most important being the long soliloquy on God's foreknowledge and man's freedom of choice, ll. 953-1085, of which there is no indication in the α MSS.

One might expect to find the MSS. of the β group representing different grades of revision, but it results from Professor Root's examination that such is not the case. They all represent copies made after the revision was complete.

Perhaps, the greatest divergence between the views of Professor Root and previous editors of Chaucer as to the relations of the *Troilus* MSS. concerns the place among these MSS. of the so-called γ group. According to McCormick, Preface to the Globe edition, p. xli, "the γ type represents a later copy, either carelessly corrected by the author, or collated by some hand after Chaucer's death." The fact that this group includes half of all the surviving MSS. and that some members of the group, like the Campsall MS. and the Corpus Christi (Cambridge) MS., No. 61, are "beautifully executed and exceptionally free from errors of their own" has, in Professor Root's opinion, exercised an undue influence over the judgment of editors, *e. g.*, Professor Skeat. As a result of a searching examination of the question, however, he has, himself, concluded—and, I believe, justly—that the α group has no claim to the position which is assigned it in the words quoted above from the Globe edition. The errors which are summarized, pp. 251 f., prove that all the MSS. of this group are descended from a common ancestor which could not have received Chaucer's correction and sanction. At the time that this archetype of the group was executed, Chaucer had not finished the revision of the poem which is represented by the β group. He had revised it only in part.

These are the main points, I believe, which Professor Root's researches have substantially established. There are others of less significance, of course, which we need not emphasize here, *e. g.*, the fact that some MSS. are of composite origin, following, say, the α tradition in the first part of the poem, the β tradition in the remainder, or, in some instances, showing in the same part alter-

nate use of the tradition of different groups. Perhaps, worthy of especial note is the curious and unfortunate circumstance that the only ms. (Philipps 8250, Cheltenham) which represents the α text consistently throughout the whole poem is very corrupt, and, as Professor Root remarks, "stands at the end of a series of endless transcriptions." He himself indicates the above-mentioned Corpus Christi ms., of the γ group, as supplying the best basis for an edition of the poem. The α and β variants, however, would have to be added at the foot of the page and the readings of this γ text would have to be changed to β readings, wherever the latter are capable of sure determination.

I confess that this seems to me a curious *non sequitur* after all the writer's efforts to dethrone the γ mss. from their position of authority. It looks as if the beautiful workmanship of these mss. had in the end "tyrannized" over Professor Root's judgment as well as over Professor Skeat's. Surely, the natural conclusion from his own argument is that the best mss. of the β group should constitute the basis of a critical text.

It should be observed that Professor Root, as he tells us in his preface, inherited this task from Sir W. S. McCormick, who had to forego its execution, owing to duties of a different kind, and consequently, had the advantage of a considerable body of collations and notes which his predecessor had accumulated. The two scholars had already been associated in editing "Specimen Extracts" of the *Troilus* mss. for the Chaucer Society (First Series, No. 89), and so the undertaking represented by the present volume passed into appropriate hands.

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Shakespeare and the Founders of Liberty in America. By CHARLES MILLS GAYLEY. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917.

A Heritage of Freedom. By MATTHEW PAGE ANDREWS. New York, George H. Doran & Co., 1918.

Americans who lived in England before the war very soon came to realize the genuine heartiness of the interest taken by the English people in America and Americans. This declared itself not only in magnificent generousities like the Rhodes Bequest and the